

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
oag.dc.gov



CONSUMER ALERT

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Attorney General Racine Warns District Residents about IRS Phone Scam

Imposter IRS Official Calls Demanding Payment, Threatens Arrest

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine is alerting consumers to a telephone scam targeting District residents where con artists impersonate Internal Revenue Service (IRS) officials demanding immediate payment or else risk arrest. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) reminds District residents that the IRS and other government entities do not call to tell you that you owe back taxes, threaten legal action, or demand payment without first sending you a notice in the mail. If you receive phone calls or emails from government entities demanding payment, you should contact those entities directly to ask if you do, in fact, owe anything.

“Tax scams do not just occur in the weeks leading up to the April tax return deadline,” said Attorney General Racine. **“Con artists prey year-round on hard-working District residents, which is why we are reminding consumers to be vigilant and make careful decisions when receiving calls from someone claiming to work for the IRS.”**

For more information about how to protect yourself from identity thieves, phone scams and other scammers, refer to our FAQ section below or visit our website at oag.dc.gov/ConsumerProtection.

How does this new IRS phone scam work?

- This scam involves telemarketers calling, saying they are with the IRS, demanding payment for back taxes, and threatening a lawsuit or other legal actions if the caller doesn't pay.
- The scammers ask the call recipients to call a phone number to make their payment.

- The **callers sometimes threaten arrest** if you don't pay.
- This **phone scam** could be **tied to identity theft**, which affects approximately 13-15 million Americans per year.
- The scammers ask for **payment via wire transfer or cash** so that once received, the payment cannot be reversed.

How can you tell if a call like this is a scam or really the IRS?

- The **IRS and other government agencies do not:**
 - **Call you to demand immediate** payment;
 - **Call to notify you** about back taxes you owe **without first having mailed you a bill**;
 - **Demand that you pay taxes without giving you an opportunity to question or appeal** the amount they say you owe;
 - Ask you for **credit card or debit card numbers over the phone**;
 - Require you to **use a specific payment method** for your taxes (such as a prepaid credit or debit card); or
 - **Threaten to bring in local police or law-enforcement groups** to have you arrested for not paying.

If you get one of these calls, what should you do?

- If you know you owe taxes or think you might owe, **call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040**. The IRS workers can help you with a payment issue.
- If you know you don't owe taxes or have no reason to believe that you do, **report the incident to the Department of the Treasury Inspector General at 1-800-366-4484**.
- You can also report the call to the Office of the Attorney General's **Consumer Protection Hotline at 202-442-9828** or email us at consumer.protection@dc.gov.

Where can consumers learn more about these kinds of scams?

- The **IRS website at www.irs.gov** has tips for avoiding IRS scams;
- The **Office of the Attorney General has educational materials** for consumers at oag.dc.gov/ConsumerProtection, including **reproducible brochures on [how to avoid telemarketing scams](#)** and other common scams.